

Maine Natural Resources Conservation Service Fiscal Year 2012-2014 Business Plan

/

Resource Assessment Issue #1 (Background): NE/NY Forestry Initiative: Maine is largely forested. The USFS Inventory Analysis identified 2, 800,000 acres in Maine in need of TSI and Crop Tree Release. Maine's forests fall far short of the ideal for the stand structure for high basal areas saw timber stands. In 2009 the Governors Conference called upon State Foresters to develop a "New England Forestry Initiative to "Keep Forests as Forests".

Expected Outcome after 3 years:

- 1) Apply 30,000 Acres of 3.4 Forestry lands performance measure by 2014.
- 2) Improve water quality on 10,000 acres of forest lands by repairing harvest trails and access roads and stabilizing stream crossings by 2014.

Primary Partners: Maine Forest Service, TSPs

Task Name	Start	End	Lead	% Comp	Comments
Goal #1: Further expand technical assistance capacity for forestry work in Maine.					
Action 1: Host workshops to assist potential TSP foresters to navigate Tech Reg.	10/1/11	09/30/12	Barnes		
Action 2: Follow up with potential TSP applicants with plan review and certification	10/1/11	09/30/12	Barnes		
Action 3: Develop and implement contribution agreement with MFS to provide FOs with consultative assistance.	2/1/12	09/30/12	Pullman/Jones		
Action 4: Implement NHQ SWAT agreement with MFS to increase capacity to apply forestry practices on the ground	10/1/11	12/30/12	Hernandez		
Goal#2: Increase EQIP/WHIP forestry related contracts .					
Action 1: Dedicate \$800,000 for Forestry CAPs to promote forest management.	10/1/11	12/30/12	Hernandez	100	
Action 2: Implement Outreach Plan for NE/NY Forestry Initiative	10/1/11	09/30/13	Tremble		
Action 2a: Develop and implement cooperative agreement with Piscataquis SWCD for outreach to increase program participation.	2/1/12	09/30/12	Paré		
Action 2b: Conduct Salmon Falls Outreach events through cooperative agreement with York SWCD.	10/1/11	09/30/12	Munroe		
Action 2c: Monitor CIG grant with SWOAM (Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine) for their work educating novice woodland owners.	10/1/11	12/30/12	Jones		

Maine Natural Resources Conservation Service Fiscal Year 2012-2014 Business Plan

Goal#3: Poorly managed forests restored by Forest Stand Improvement, including improved structure for wildlife and regeneration of desired crop species					
Action #1: FO staff work with Forest Landowners and TSP partners to implement Forest practices for timber stand improvement and/or wildlife habitat enhancement/restoration on 10,000 acres annually.	10/1/11	09/30/14	Paré		
Goal#4: Improve water quality from reduced sedimentation to surface waters through buffers, repaired forest trails, stream crossings and access roads.					
Action #1: FO staff work with Forest Landowners to improve water quality on 3500 acres annually by stabilizing/repairing forest trails and landings, access roads and stabilizing stream crossings.	10/1/12	09/30/14	Paré		

Resource Assessment Issue #2 (Background): Improve the delivery of Farm Bill programs to recover **New England cottontail** and other early successional wildlife species. Less than 1.6% of the forests in York and Cumberland Counties are in an early successional state. As a result, wildlife species dependent upon this habitat, including the endangered New England cottontail (NEC), are declining in southern Maine. The historic range of the NEC, the only rabbit indigenous to Maine and New England, is estimated to have shrunk by over 83%. Unless aggressive action is taken to increase the amount of suitable habitat for NEC, we risk having NEC be federally listed as an endangered species and its possible extirpation in Maine. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) have identified the NEC as a species of greatest conservation need. NRCS likewise has identified the NEC as a priority species for its conservation programs. Federal, state, and non-governmental agencies have developed a formal NEC plan and have been partnering to advance NEC Wildlife Habitat funding opportunities for private landowners interested in managing their land to increase the NEC habitat and populations. This program provides Maine landowners with federal Farm Bill money to address key wildlife conservation needs.

Expected Outcome after 3 years:

1. Develop local capacity to provide TA and FA to landowners in the target area (York and Cumberland counties).
2. By 2014, improve/restore 1000 acres of Essential NEC Habitat in Maine.

Primary Partners: USFWS, Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Maine Forest Service, and York SWCD

Task Name	Start	End	Lead	% Comp	Comments
Goal #2.1: Promote increased technical capacity to implement NEC Action Plan.					
Action #1: Provide office/computer/phone and vehicle for biologist hired with NFWF funds in Scarborough.	10/1/11	09/30/12	Hernandez	100	

Maine Natural Resources Conservation Service Fiscal Year 2012-2014 Business Plan

Goal #2.2: Seek TA/FA funding from NHQ for NEC initiative in collaboration with NH NRCS					
Action #1: Submit annual requests to NHQ for WHIP initiative funds for NEC	10/1/11	9/30/14	Hernandez		Request submitted for FY 12.
Goal#2.3: Reach landowners in York and Cumberland Counties with special focus in 1) Cape Elizabeth/Scarborough; 2) Kittery/York; and 3) Eliot/Berwick areas.					
Action #1: Conduct outreach through at least one press release and newsletter annually.	10/1/11	9/30/14	Tremble		
Action #2: Host 3 NEC Team Meetings or workshops (1 annually)	10/1/11	9/30/14	Munroe	30%	NEC Field Training and Team meeting held in Fall 2011.
Action #3: Develop/distribute fact sheets on benefits of managing lands for target species	10/1/11	9/30/14	Munroe	100	NEC Fact Sheet released Fall 2011.
Action #3a: Develop/locate fact sheets	10/1/11	09/30/12	Munroe		
Goal #2.4: Provide TA/FA to landowners with goal of 1000 acres of improved/restored NEC habitat.					
Action #1: Develop protocol with partners for efficiency in planning and implementation.	10/1/11	05/1/12	Munroe		
Action #2: Conduct planning/resource inventory on 250 acres annually.	10/1/11	09/30/14	Munroe		
Action #3: Contract 250 acres annually for NEC restoration using WHIP or EQIP funds.	10/1/11	09/30/14	Munroe		

Resource Assessment Issue #3: (Background): Penobscot River Restoration/Pleasant River - Maine's rivers and streams have undergone dramatic changes over 200 years. Changes in stream geomorphology, including over-widened channels, a loss of stream complexity, and a decrease in stream connectivity can all be contributed to anthropogenic factors. After the log driving era in Maine, ending in the late 1970's, timber harvesting continued due to the construction of a sizable road network as an alternative means of access to the timber stands in the region. This road network consists of hundreds of problem culverts acting as fish barriers reducing river and stream connectivity and function. Within just the lower and middle sections of the Penobscot River almost 800 culverts are said to be severe barriers; it is estimated that an additional 30% of the habitat in the Penobscot River is inaccessible to endangered Atlantic salmon due to problem culverts.

NRCS is collaborating with federal and state agencies, tribes, non-profits and most importantly private landowners to reconnect habitat for native fish species including brook trout and the endangered Atlantic salmon by fixing problem culverts. NRCS has legal responsibilities to use its technical and financial authorities to help conserve and restore species protected by the federal Endangered Species Act. In addition, policy and conservation program rules require NRCS to assist private landowners in achieving sustainable resource management, and to help recover species in decline.

Maine Natural Resources Conservation Service Fiscal Year 2012-2014 Business Plan

Due to the large amount of problem culverts on the Penobscot River, NRCS and partners are using the “focus area” approach for their restoration efforts. The focus area on the Pleasant River sub-watershed was determined using a combination of brook trout and Atlantic salmon quality habitat information, along with NRCS client availability. This initiative is striving to reconnect the river and stream habitat within the focus area, and in addition work with the Penobscot Nation on culvert crossings and other fisheries related projects.

Expected Outcome after 3 years:

- 1) Established partnership to enhance fish passage in the Penobscot River Drainage Area.
- 2) Landowners within the Pleasant River Drainage are aware of NRCS programs and services.
- 3) Large landowners are aware of options related to stream crossings and value of fish passage.
- 4) Over 3000 acres of habitat (lake) and over 25 miles of habitat above barriers will be reconnected.

Task Name	Start	End	Lead	% Comp	Comments
Goal #3.1: Increase landowner awareness of NRCS programs and services.					
Action #1: Identify, educate and attract agency stakeholders and entities to partner in restoration effort.	10/1/11	09/30/14	Norment, Naumann, Power		
Action #2: Provide a road stream crossing survey training to Penobscot Indian fisheries biologist and staff; training includes on-site field work	6/1/12	09/30/12	Naumann		This training will pave the way for future road stream crossing projects on Penobscot Nation lands
Action #3: With Piscataquis SWCD collaboration through a cooperative agreement, increase awareness of NRCS programs and services with emphasis on forestry CAPs and forestry practices on private non-industrial forest lands.	2/1/12	09/30/12	Power		
Goal#3.2: Eliminate fish passage barriers.					
Action #1: Complete fish passage project at outlet to Mattamiscontis Lake with Penobscot Nation	10/1/11	09/30/12	Schmidt, Naumann		1,025 acres of habitat (lake) and 6.5 miles of habitat above barrier will be reconnected
Action #2: investigate opportunities to provide fish passage project at the outlet to South Branch lake with the Penobscot Nation	10/1/11	09/30/14	Schmidt, Naumann		2,035 acres of habitat (lake) and 8.5 miles of habitat above barrier will be reconnected
Action #3: Remove 3 fish passage culvert barriers on the AMC land base	7/15/12	9/30/12	Power, Naumann		10 Miles of habitat above the culverts will be reconnected
Action #4: Through program technical assistance educate large forest landowners and municipalities on the scientific and economic justifications for using stream simulation technology to eliminate fish passage barriers on their lands.	10/1/11	09/30/12	Power, Naumann		
Action #5: Develop ArcGIS maps for large forest land managers identifying and prioritizing fish barrier problems on their land base.	10/1/11	09/30/13	USFWS, Naumann		
Action #6: Provide municipalities in focus area with technical assistance to demonstrate stream simulation technologies	1/31/2012	09/30/13	Power, Naumann		

Maine Natural Resources Conservation Service Fiscal Year 2012-2014 Business Plan

Task Name	Start	End	Lead	% Comp	Comments
Goal #3.3. Increase capacity to provide technical and financial resources to implement projects on large landowner holdings.					
Action #1: Investigate options to provide program and services to large landowners in the Pleasant River Watershed.	10/1/11	09/30/12	Power, Naumann		Explore similar arrangements to Project SHARE work in Washington County
Action#2: Collaborate with USFW's Partners for Fish and Wildlife and Gulf of Maine Programs to leverage technical and financial assistance for projects in the Penobscot watershed.	10/1/11	09/30/13	Naumann, Norment		
Action #3: Collaborate with USFW's Partners for Fish and Wildlife and Gulf of Maine Programs streamline/expedite section 7 ESA consultations when and where possible.	10/1/11	09/30/13	Naumann, Norment		
Goal#3.4: Enhance fish habitat					
Action#1 Create practice payment schedule components involving the creation of fish habitat complexity: large wood (LW) additions, and remnant log drive dam removals	10/1/11	09/30/12	Long, Norment, Naumann, Power		
Action#2 Provide workshops to forest land owners in conjunction with Maine Forest Service on the importance of LW in streams	10/1/12	09/30/14	Naumann, Power		

Resource Assessment Issue #4 (Background): Irrigation – Maine Irrigators need to comply with Sustainable Water Use Rules, MDEP rule, Chapter 587. Irrigators withdrawing water from water bodies subject to this rule will need to maintain in-stream flows and/or lake or pond water levels that are protective of aquatic life. The rule may necessitate an irrigator developing another water source to comply with the rules.

Expected Outcome after 3 years: 5000 acres of cropland by 2014 with irrigation water management plans applied.

Primary Partners: Maine DEP, Maine Department of Agriculture, and Maine Potato Board.

Task Name	Start	End	Lead	% Comp	Comments
Goal #4.1: Provide annual FA/TA funds through state initiative to assist farmers comply with low flow rules					
Action #1: Set aside EQIP and AMA funds for irrigation initiative in Maine in 2012, 2013.	10/1/11	09/30/14	Hernandez		2012 – Hernandez established \$1 Million EQIP Irrigation Pool
Action #2: Apply irrigation practices to 5000 acres by 2014.	10/1/11	09/30/14	DCs		
Action #3: Create Irrigation Subcommittee of the STTC to determine best approach once agreement expires.	10/1/11	09/30/12	Hernandez		

Maine Natural Resources Conservation Service Fiscal Year 2012-2014 Business Plan

Task Name	Start	End	Lead	% Comp	Comments
Action #4: Deliver irrigation training to engineering and field office staff.	1/1/12	5/1/12	Baumert		
Action #4: Conduct outreach through at least one press release and posting on the web annually of availability of irrigation funds.	10/1/11	09/30/14	Tremble		
Goal #4: Provide effective delivery of multi-disciplinary technical assistance in development of irrigation reservoirs with associated wetland compensation as needed.					
Action #1: Develop communication protocol so all NRCS players are on same page throughout process.	01/1/12	09/30/12	Paré & Lead DCs		Convened meeting for Doyen project on February 7, 2012. Set up SharePoint site.
Action #2: Develop associated designs/vegetative plans for compensation sites	10/1/11	6/1/12	DCs		Goodwin, Engineering lead; SO lead to develop vegetative plans
Action #3: Develop irrigation pond designs	10/1/11	6/1/12	Goodwin		
Action #4: Provide installation and check out for implementation of irrigation pond and compensation site	05/1/12	09/30/12	Wilson, Swiatek, Goodwin		

Resource Assessment Issue #5 (Background): Salmon Falls Watershed - The Salmon Falls River is fed by an ecologically diverse land area shared by the state of Maine and New Hampshire, and drains into the Great Bay Estuary, a coastal ecosystem of national importance. Approximately 28,000 people currently rely on the Salmon Falls watershed to provide clean drinking water. The watershed is threatened by increases in polluted runoff resulting from rapid population growth and conversion of forested land to developed areas. The Salmon Falls Watershed Collaborative (SFWC) is an action-oriented partnership between local, state and federal partners working to protect and sustain high quality drinking water in the Salmon Falls River watershed.

Expected Outcome after 3 years:

1. Promote TA/FA for development of 30 CAPs in watershed by 2014.
2. Increase awareness of USDA programs and services.
3. Implement forestry practices on 1500 acres of land within the watershed.

Primary Partners: York SWCD, EPA, Maine Forest Service, Piscataqua Region Partnership (PREP), Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve

Maine Natural Resources Conservation Service Fiscal Year 2012-2014 Business Plan

Task Name	Start	End	Lead	% Comp	Comments
Goal #5.1: Conduct outreach to inform/educate landowners of USDA NRCS programs and services.					
Action #1: Host outreach meetings (2) through cooperative agreement with York SWCD.	10/1/11	02/29/12	Munroe	100	
Action #2: Host 2 sign-up workshops through cooperative agreement with York SWCD.	01/1/12	05/1/12	Munroe	100	
Action #3: Develop and distribute press releases and newsletters for program sign ups and success stories (2/year)	10/1/12	09/30/14	Tremble, Munroe		
Goal #5.2: Development of 30 Forestry caps by 2014					
Action #1: Contract with landowners for development of 20 forestry CAPs annually.	10/1/12	09/30/14	Munroe		
Goal #5.3: Promote implementation of forestry CAP or forestry stewardship plans to achieve 1500 acres of forestland with conservation applied.					
Action #1: Follow up with landowners with CAPs to consider implementation actions.	10/1/12	09/30/14	Munroe		
Action #2: Contract with woodland landowners to apply forestry practices on 1500 acres.	10/1/12	09/30/14	Munroe		

Issue #6: Civil Rights and Outreach

Task Name	Start	End	Lead	% Comp	Comments
Action #1: Implement Outreach Plan	10/1/11	09/30/12	Tremble		
Action #2: Oversee agreement for workshops for small/beginning farmers hosted by Andy Valley SWCD.	10/1/11	09/30/12	Paré, Tremble, Gorham	30%	
Action #3: Host two small farm/beginning farmer outreach workshops annually.	02/1/12	09/30/12	Tremble, Paré		
Action #4: Through cooperative agreement, host three workshops in Piscataquis County to improve program participation.	2/1/12	09/30/12	Paré, Tremble, Power		
Action #5: Collaborate with FSA and RD to conduct ADA reviews.	10/1/11	09/30/12	Vigue/Jacobs		
Action #6: Host two Diversity Day events with FSA and APHIS (Bangor and Lewiston Locations)	10/1/11	2/29/12	Hernandez/CRAC	100	

Maine Natural Resources Conservation Service Fiscal Year 2012-2014 Business Plan

Issue #7: Putting our house in order

Task Name	Start	End	Lead	% Comp	Comments
Goal #7.1: Reorganize staffing responsibilities to assure agency policies re: grants/agreements/contracting are followed.					
Action #1: Assign role of Administrative contact to ASTC for Special Programs	10/1/11	2/1/12	Hernandez	100	
Action #2: Meet with Program Managers to discuss change in roles.	10/1/11	2/1/12	Hernandez	100	
Action #3: Organize and streamline processes for agreement development and monitoring	2/1/12	9/30/12	Jones		
Action #4: Provide more consistent follow through with agreement reporting requirements and deliverables.	2/1/12	0/30/12	Jones		
Action #5: Create ACES position to assist with easement monitoring.	3/1/12	09/30/12	Hernandez		
Goal #7.2: Improve operations by implementing QA corrective Actions					
Action #1: Implement Corrective Action Plan Items (RC SharePoint site)	10/1/11	09/30/12	Jones		Chris Jones provides lead on follow up.
Action #2: Implement Quality Assurance Report Actions	10/1/11	09/30/12	Paré		
Action#2a: Send reminder to field re: include O&M with practice designs/plan; check for inclusion during reviews and spot checks	10/1/11	09/30/12	Paré		
Action #2b: Provide one on one training with field staff who need assistance with use of business tools/reports for workload management.	10/1/11	09/30/12	Paré		
Action #2c: During mid year reviews discuss CTA practices and need to be sure documentation in place.	10/1/11	09/30/12	Paré		
Action #2d: Develop job sheets for 614, 642, 442, 449, 430, and 553.	10/1/11	09/30/12	Baumert		
Action #2e: Provide guidance to employees re: use of older engineering design tools	10/1/11	09/30/12	Baumert		
Action #2f: Provide guidance relative to use of nest boxes as part of larger system	10/1/11	09/30/12	Pullman/Norment		
Action #3: Complete Follow up on Quality Review Actions	10/1/11	09/30/12	Jones		Lead on assuring follow up
Action #4: Complete follow up on Spot Check Actions	10/1/11	09/30/12	Jones		

Maine Natural Resources Conservation Service Fiscal Year 2012-2014 Business Plan

Goal #5.3 – Implement Quality Assurance Activities to assure NRCS policies and procedures are followed and to eliminate issues associated with high risk activities.					
Action #1: Implement QAP	10/1/11	09/30/12	Paré		
Action #2: Participate in NHQ Civil Rights and Operations Review in April 2012. Implement actions.	2/1/12	09/30/12	Hernandez		
Goal #5.4 Implement USA Staffing					
Action #1: SAO and HR staff participate in USA Staffing Training	01/1/12	02/1/12	Vigue	100	
Action #2: Train Selecting Officials in USA Staffing through one-on-one process.	02/1/12	09/30/12	Vigue		
Goal #5.5 Address File Management Issues associated with FO Farm Bill Contracting					
Action #1: Coordinate NARC Records Training for SO and DCs	01/1/12	02/1/12	Vigue	100	
Action #2: Issue Bulletin providing guidance relative to filing and disposition of Farm Bill contracts	01/1/12	03/1/12	Vigue	100	
Action #3: Issue Bulletin providing guidance, if necessary, in use of NARC storage.	02/1/12	09/30/12	Vigue		
Goal #5.6 Implement new Admin software and procedures					
Action #1: Adopt new electronic FOIAxpress	10/1/12	09/30/12	Vigue		
Action #2: Adopt LRAT software	10/1/12	09/30/12	Vigue	100	
Action 3a: Budget Officer and Financial Technician attend training for new FMMI	1/1/12	4/1/12	Vigue/Bolduc		
Action 3b: Make transition to FMMI	4/1/12	09/30/12	Vigue/Bolduc		
Action 3c: Contracting Officer attend training for FMMI	2/1/12	09/30/12	Vigue/Jacobs		